TASK FORCE THUNDERBOLT CHRONICLES

VOLUME I, ISSUE 4 JANUARY 2005

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THUNDERBOLT SIX

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Message from the Front

Happy New Years from Baghdad! I hope and pray the holidays were good to you. They certainly were to us. The FRG showered us with gifts along with Americans we don't even know. We managed to find time to celebrate Christmas, Chanucka and New Years between missions; and we were able to spend Christmas with several of our convoys from Kuwait over the weekend: nothing like being with "family." I will remember lot's of things from this deployment. First, this year was the first time Christmas and the first day of Chanucka were celebrated in Saddam's old palace on the same day. Secondly, I will forever remember the Grinch, SGT Garcia, who made this Christmas VTC unlike any other for our kids—the next best thing to being there. Of course, the highlight was talking to you, our loved ones on the phone.

Grace and I continue to hear wonderful reports of people taking care of each other: supporting SGT Bates and his family during their loss, participation in the "Walk to Freedom," and help for pregnant spouses. These acts of kindness along with programs like CARE team training make all the difference in the world. Thank you for everything you do. We are so blessed to have you in the Thunderbolt family.

The truck batteries are doing incredibly well. I get reports from the 37th

THUNDERBOLT SEVEN

Hello Thunderbolt family:

I hope you are in great spirits getting over the holidays. We enjoyed the opportunity to present to you a Holiday program and hope you enjoyed watching as much as we enjoyed presenting it. As we enter another year; I ask that we take the support, service, and care from last year into this year. We continue to perform well as we provide support to the units. We are proud of all our Soldiers and know that their success is determined by your support and ability to take care of home while we answer the call for duty. The Soldiers are earning recognition and upholding the true Thunderbolt tradition of delivering timely service to anyone in need. We hear the word "Hero" often as it is applied to athletes, but who are our true Heroes? I think it is you. At the close of each day you have made a major contribution to the cause of freedom by allowing us to serve in a professional manner in support of our nation. As the Rear-Detachment continues to hold up the Colors and take care of the rear, we remind you to use them if the need arises. Thank You for providing help where needed when you can. We have had our share of situations requiring outside help for families and you met the need each and every time.

Thank You again for all you do,

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY

BY CPT MATT DENNIS

Dear FRG members, Friends, and Family,

It has only been a short while since my last update but many changes have taken place. Seven members of the Thunderbolt Family will have returned to Ft. Sill by the time you read this. SFC Meyers, SFC Milton, SFC Martinez, SSG Morales, SGT Miller, and SGT Lanier of HHB, and CPT Antoniotti of 1-12 FA have completed their mission which had them attached to another unit performing forward observation and fire support and effects coordination. We are glad to see them leave to re-join their families after a hard year spent in combat.

The 17th BDE Football team receives their Second Place Medals.

This month we had the joy of promoting several of our Soldiers. SSG Martinez went to SFC, and PV2s Ross and Kitzman both advanced to PFC. Its always great to promote our Soldiers as it confirms that our organization is growing and becoming more proficient both at the individual Soldier level and as a group.

SGT "Coach" Hoxie led the Team Thunderbolt flag football team to yet another second place finish in the Christmas tournament. Several new players came out to offer up their talent in the quest for a championship. LTC Gregory proved that old age isn't slowing him down when he stepped up to play Quarterback for the team. COL Reid and CSM Williams support the team from the sidelines. The energy and teamwork the team displays is intoxicating, and serves as a testament that the Thunderbolts are made up individuals

COL Reid Bids Farewell to the Fire support team.

Headquarters Battery

(Continued from page 2)

that, when combined, perform as one single cohesive unit. The sporting events here are not only good team building events but also serve as an outlet for stress, and a way to have fun. We'll win one soon.

Our plates have gotten a bit fuller as a major tenant unit is on its way out and we have assumed some of it responsibilities. Our new mission gives the 17th command and control of both base operations and base defense. Now, while we will still ensure the Soldiers performing missions "outside the wire" have a comfortable place to reside while not on mission, we will also make sure the base is kept safe and secure. We will do this by assuming control of the units who actually man the perimeter. We know this job is being done to a high standard currently, but if anything can be done to make improvements in performance or efficiency, you can bet the 17th will find them.

The St. Barbara's Dinner Cake allowed us to mark the occasion even though we were far from home.

I'll leave you now with a report that all is well in HHB, and we have put the holiday season behind us. We are looking forward to the challenges ahead, but mostly we are looking forward to returning to our loved ones safe and sound. Continue to support your Soldiers by communicating via mail and internet and by spreading the "good" stories back home.

As always you can contact me at:
matthew.b.dennis@us.army.mil

THUNDERBOLT SIX

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Group commander routinely telling me of their high level of performance. The headquarters is also performing at a very high level. Having just mastered Garrison Command operations, we have added the base defense mission to what we are doing along with several new units. The staff has risen to the challenge and continues to make Camp Victory a better place to work and live.

Over the next few months, the Army's decision to reduce the number of troops in Iraq following the successful national elections will take effect. This is great news and reflects continued progress in building the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and political development, a sovereign, democratically elected government. That is great news! Things are progressing despite attacks from those who oppose us. Keep praying for us. It is making a difference!

I'll close now by first saying thanks again for your support, loyalty, and love; and secondly, take care of yourselves and each other. We miss you, love you, and can't wait to see you again.

Thunderbolt!

CSM Williams caught with a cup of Cocoa. Instead of his staple coffee.

CAMP VICTORY'S MAYOR CELL

Baghdad, Iraq—While the holiday season may be entering hibernation for another year, residents of Camp Victory have once again been reminded that celebration can follow us to any region of the world. Brothers and sisters-in-arms, as well as our coalition partners, gathered together *en masse* to have a Merry Christmas and ring in the New Year.

The Lighting of the Holiday Palm Tree was a big event.

The Christmas festivities began in mid-December when Soldiers from the Camp Victory Mayor Cell and other 17th Field Artillery Brigade units held a video teleconference session in Al Faw Palace. Families back home gathered together to see their Soldiers performing songs and skits, including a reading of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* complete with costumes. Also at the event, Major Kevin Gregory was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and received many congratulations from Soldiers and families alike.

On Christmas Eve the Camp Victory Mayor Cell hosted a tree-lighting open-house where teammates from tenant units, Kellog, Brown and Root (KBR), and The American Red Cross joined together for anything *but* a silent night. The Master of Ceremonies, Lieutenant Colonel Tracy Banister, began the celebration by leading the group in Christmas carols as the Holiday tree was lit front of the Mayor Cell along with the festive holiday palm tree. Afterwards the crowd was invited to enjoy goodies including sandwiches, cookies, eggnog, and holiday cake.

Everyone in the Mayor's Cell wondered which Gift would be next during the Christmas Party.

On Christmas Day the Mayor Cell celebrated with a White Elephant gift exchange using gifts pro-

PFC Ross can't decide which gift she wants to open during the White Elephant Gift exchange.

vided by our supporters from across the country and from our Family Readiness Group. It is truly encouraging to know we have such generous support from so many caring people.

On 28 December Morale, Welfare and Recreation along with Lieutenant Commander Buckfield of the Australian Army presented the variety show "Tour De Force." The event was emceed by performers Bessie Bardot and Geoff Barker. The Australian Royal Navy band opened the show with a set of classics including some AC/DC to warm up the crowd. The show featured musical and comedic talent and highlighted Australian icon "Little Pattie," who was the youngest performer to take to the USO stage for Soldiers in the Vietnam War. After the show the performers met with the audience for autographs and pictures. A warm thank-you goes out to our Australian teammates for bringing such an energetic evening to the tenants and teammates of Camp Victory.

In the final event of the year the United Service Organization brought a New Years Eve gala to Camp Victory headlined by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace. After some encouraging words from General Pace and Command Sergeant Major Gainey, *American Idol* finalist Diana DeGarmo took the stage to sing some old favorites. Her act included a medley of Gloria Estefan tunes, and a dance competition with audience members doing the "mashed potatoes," "the twist," and "the Pulp Fiction."

Comedian Reggie McFadden took the stage for an entertaining set followed by country artist Michael Peterson. Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Colonel Jack Jacobs (Ret) related stories of his time in service, which were both amusing and wisdom-filled. After the show General Pace, Command Sergeant Major Gainey, and the performers met audience members for autographs and pictures. All in all, we had a festive holiday season and are ready to take on the New Year. Thanks for all you do in supporting us and for making our mission much easier by keeping the home fires burning.

Diana DeGarmo Entertains Camp Victory residents with a dance contest during her performance on New Years Eve.

CAMP SLAYER'S MAYOR CELL

New Years Celebration Camp Slayer Style
Major Eric Healey

Camp Slayer Baghdad Iraq said goodbye to 2005 in style with the sounds of the 4th Infantry Division Band. The tenants of the Camp gathered in the spirit of brotherhood to ring in the New Year. The streets seemed like Times Square, with the crowd of residents and guests, to say farewell and remember the many accomplishments of the past year.

The band played a myriad of music genres. They began the show with the smooth sounds of Jazz, a quartet to warm the gathering crowd. The night was clear and cool, but the crowd was dressed appropriately for the nights festivities. The band continued performing with a mix of oldies that had a few in the crowd dancing. The camp's MWR facility, The Lions Den on Main Street served snacks, hot chocolate and coffee, which drew many patrons on that chilly night. The band transitioned to country and western, which had the crowd tapping their feet to the beat of the country twang. The two steppers took the floor and entertained the masses. As the evening progressed the street became almost electric when the band went into a Latin routine. Latin dancing is a pillar of Camp Slayer, and many dancers wiggled, spun and stepped to the sassy beat.

As midnight approached, the crowd became tighter. The band went into a mix of classics, which had everyone awaiting the New Year. The band requested participation from the crowd to sing in unison along with the band singers, as they prepared for the climax only minutes away. Then it came, the passing of the baton to 2006, the band and spectators, now in unison sang "Auld Lang Syne" which filled the Baghdad skies. One could see the emotion of the crowd, mixed with happiness and laughter, the New Year finally arrived. It was a time of reflection of the year past and the anticipation of the year to come.

Fox News attended the festivities to capture the spectacle for family, friends, and the people at home to show the spirit of the forces deployed on this New Year's Day. Finally, the conductor closed the night's performance and the majority of the crowd dissipated. A few people stayed behind and continued to celebrate as the band stowed their equipment. Even in the setting of war, service members, civilians, and contractors celebrate a year's end and the beginning of a new one, full of hopes and dreams. The festivities gave residents an opportunity to reflect on a year steeped in accomplishment and the hopes of a prosperous year to come with new challenges.

CPL Ashe and CPT Kennedy take a break on Saddam's Throne

Avoid Cold Weather Injuries

Dress warmly, in layers. Preserving an air space between the body and the outer layer of clothing will help retain body heat. Choose fabrics such as cotton or wool which insulate but also allow sweat to evaporate. It is especially important to protect the feet, hands, head, and face. These parts of the body are farthest from the heart and are the hardest to keep warm.
Almost half your body heat can be lost through the head, so cover it up as well.

Keep dry. Wetness greatly increases the chance of cold stress. Always have extra clothing available if there's a chance you could get wet. Keep your feet dry, they are very susceptible to frostbite.

Take a break. You may think it's wise to keep on working in cold temperatures. After all, working makes you break a sweat and you feel warmer. But if you become fatigued during physical activity, your body loses its ability to properly retain heat. This causes rapid cooling which can quickly lead to cold stress. When you take a break, be sure to replace lost
fluids and calories by drinking warm, sweet, caffeine-free nonalcoholic drinks and soup.

Eat right. A proper diet provides your body with the nutrients it needs to withstand cold stress. A restrictive diet may deprive your body the ability to work well in cold temperatures.

Don't work alone. In cold-stress prone environments, a buddy system should be used. Look out for one another and be alert for the symptoms of cold stress.

Learn what to look out for. The effects of cold stress may not be apparent to its victim. The first symptoms of hypothermia are uncontrollable shivering and the sensation of cold. The heartbeat slows and may become irregular, and the pulse weakens. As the condition worsens, severe shaking or rigid muscles may be evident. The victim may also have slurred speech,
memory lapses, and drowsiness. Cool skin, slow, irregular breathing, and exhaustion occur as the body temperature drops even lower. This is a serious condition requiring immediate medical attention.

Frostbite can occur without accompanying hypothermia. Frostbite occurs when the fluids around the body's tissues freeze. The most vulnerable parts of the body are the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers, and toes. Symptoms of frostbite include coldness and tingling in the affected part, followed by numbness; changes in skin color to white or grayish-yellow, initial pain which subsides as the condition worsens, and possibly blisters. Frostbite can cause irreversible tissue damage and requires immediate medical attention.

If you work in lower-temperature environments, always be alert for the possibility of cold stress. Follow these guidelines to help protect yourself from injury. Remember, it doesn't have to be freezing for cold stress to occur. Take steps to protect yourself.

CAMP LIBERTY'S GOVERNOR CELL

Raider 6 Speaks:

In breaking with the tradition of making New Year's resolutions, this year I've decided not to make any. There are just too many reasons not to make resolutions. Mainly, they are just too darned hard to keep over a period of 365 days. If I did make an attempt at a few, they would be something related to the military anyway as Rachel often points out. At the same time, she tells me that I need to loosen up and not be so militant, steadfast, and proper. So instead of creating a list for myself, I've decided to write a few for Rachel. How about that for an idea?

1. Cleaning House. I want Rachel to attempt to refrain from throwing away all of my old shirts, shorts, jeans, pants, and shoes just because they are almost two years out of style when you return. She knows that I like them, but she doesn't want me to look like George Burns. I like George Burns.

SGT McCoy helps a Soldier.

2. Moving Furniture. I would like Rachel to resolve not to move the furniture around while I am gone, knowing that I will bump into things in the dark when I return. And bumping into things is not good.

3. Rearranging the Kitchen. I want Rachel to not move the utensils, plates, pots and pans around in the kitchen. I am the cook in the house and I want to be able to find things, especially for my midnight snack.

SFC Foutz and SGT Kenning take a break and play a little Foos Ball.

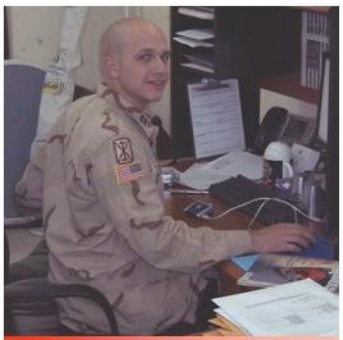
4. Selling Old, Unused Stuff. I want Rachel to resolve not sell all of my seldom, and most times never used stuff on Ebay while I am gone. This includes, but is not limited to: model artillery pieces, old software, mountains of TA 50, extra boots, old uniforms, socks, T-Shirts, etc.

SGT Gould takes the oath of Re-enlistment

5. The Man Room. I would like Rachel to resolve not to occupy the "Man Room" of the house. In agreeing to this, the trophies (hunting and sports) will remain collecting dust despite the fact that a ten-pound bass staring at the kids makes them uncomfortable. Rachel will also leave the plaques, awards, nick knacks and mindless things hanging around right where I left them; especially the singing Billy Bass. However, she may resist expansion of the "Man Room" over into the rest of the family's area by any means necessary.

To conclude, we'll transition back to me, Raider 6. While putting these together, I've resolved to change my mind and have decided to make a resolution after all. I resolve to remember how grateful I am to have a wife like mine every hour of every day. She's intelligent, beautiful, slow to anger, and a moral compass beyond belief. All the time, she is a mom and sometimes she's a dad. As a disclaimer, I hold on to all those extra things as a representation of the years of sacrifice, hard work, and friendships – for both of us.

SPC Merritt and SFC Foutz show off their injuries from the Christmas fun run.



CPT Duncan hard at work.

2LT Smothers tries his best to win against PFC Meyers during the Christmas X-Box tournament

The Camp Liberty Governor and Mayor Cells compete in the Christmas volleyball tournament.

CAMP STRIKER'S MAYOR CELL

By 1SG Oscar Sims, Jr.

Greetings to all! We at Camp Striker have been very busy this holiday season. Besides the day to day work we do to keep Striker running, we recently had the opportunity to open a new chapel, new gym, and a new Pizza Hut. That's right, now you can get a slice of home here at Striker.

MAJ Chenoweth and the Red Jacket of Recognition

When I think about Christmas, I think about traditions. Unfortunately we were unable to share these traditions with our families and loved ones this year, although the mayor cell celebrated together and had a great time. We honored and celebrated some new traditions such as the infamous "Red Coat of Recognition" and the coveted "Muddy Boot of Shame" brought to us by our brothers from 1/17th FA. Additionally we exchanged gag gifts through a secret Santa exchange. We've also started a monthly cookout and movie night.

Our December monthly dinner and movie was on Christmas Eve. CSM Werkheiser, recently appointed as Striker Grill Master, grilled steaks and burgers, tending his grill with great care, because he knew this was an extra special night. Yes, this night was not merely a dinner and movie night, nor was it just Christmas Eve -- it was also the first (and undoubtedly last) Santa Gift Exchange. With Decem-

Dinner and a Movie—Striker Style

SFC Parrott dresses his New Years Eve "Near Beer" up a little

ber's movie "It Came From Outer Space" playing in the background, the hesitant faces of the Striker Team Members unwrapped and swapped their presents. The lucky winner at the end of the night was MAJ Chenoweth who received a complimentary addition to his wardrobe. It was a fun night, where a continuous string of laughs and camaraderie was shared by all.

As we look ahead, to the near year, the Soldiers of Camp Striker wish each of you a very happy and healthy 2006. We look forward to 2006, as it brings us that much closer to home, amongst our beloved family and friends. As for resolutions, we resolve to take care of one another, and make our time here in Iraq as enjoyable as possible. In closing, I'd like to share a personal a favorite poem with you.

May peace fill all the empty spaces around you
And in you, may contentment answer all your wishes.
May comfort be yours, warm and soft like a sigh.
And may the coming year
show you that every day is really a first day,
a new year.
Let abundance be your constant companion,
so that you have much to share.
May mirth be near you always,
like a lamp shining brightly
on the many paths you travel.
May you be true love.
-- **Author Unknown**

MAJ Chenoweth and SFC Green

When Soldiers--the centerpiece of our Army--and the civilian employees and family members, who serve right alongside them, live by the warrior ethos, it gives us strength to maintain our commitment to freedom and to our way of life.

Army Chief of Staff Gen. Peter J. Schoomaker

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

by Chaplain (MAJ) John Stepp

Some wonderful things have happened since you last received the Newsletter. An historical election occurred. The election was extremely successful due to God's blessings upon the process and people who participated in the election. Task Force Thunderbolt was a major part of this process. I believe that God worked through the Thunderbolts to bless the process. We also experienced a wonderful Holiday season. You saw our talent (or lack thereof) and comic relief at the Holiday VTC. Many of us participated in worship around the Holidays. Three Thunderbolts, CPT Sylvestre, CPT Bates, and I sang in four worship services as part of the Hard Corps Christmas Chorale. Our Jewish brothers and sisters have celebrated Hanukah. The Hajj, for our Islamic brothers and sisters, will be over about the time you receive this newsletter.

Now that the Holidays are over we should pause and give God thanks for His presence and protection. I am asked often by people who attend the chapel, Soldiers in general, and a few Thunderbolts, "For what do we have to be thankful?" I almost always say the same thing, "God is with us each and every step of the way; and each and every second of each day. God is also with our families." Knowing that God is with us and you is the best source of strength for all of us. I am reminded of Joshua 1:9 where God told Joshua, the new leader of Israel, these words just after Moses had died, "I command you-do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." The second source of strength is the love and support of our families. Knowing that you believe in us and that you support us 100% in this mission is more essential than I can explain. You are our biggest morale boosters. Thank you for thriving so well and keeping our spirits strong with your cards, letters, and goodies from home.

I promised you from the first Newsletter that I would provide you tips to a successful reunion. These tips come from Issue Three, USAREUR REUNION TIMES. I trust that you are keeping these for use down the road. I ask that you would occasionally read these. They are important for R and R leave and will be even more important during reunion and reintegration. BIG POINT HERE: ALL WANT TO FEEL CARED FOR AND APPRECIATED.

Husbands here are a few ways to demonstrate care and appreciation:

- Hug and kiss your wife and tell her you love her before you get out of bed each morning.
- Tell her that you love her during breakfast.
- Kiss her good-bye and express your appreciation for her.
- Call her during the day to just ask her how she is doing and tell her you love her.
- After work, call her before you leave to tell her any change in plans or what time your will be home.
- Buy her flowers or a small token of your appreciation once a week. Include a hand-written message of thanks and love.
- Upon arriving home, give her a big kiss and spend a few minutes talking about how her day went. Make her the priority. Don't do anything else until you have given her your undivided attention.
- Help her clear off the table and help her do the dishes, chores, and get the children ready for bed. Hug her and tell her you love her before you go to sleep.

Wives here a few ways you can demonstrate care and appreciation:

- Compliment him often and sincerely. This will build his esteem.
- Take good care of your spiritual, mental, and physical health.
- Brag on your husband to others.
- Date your husband and be spontaneous.
- Tell him how much you appreciate his help and contribution to the family.

Encourage him when he gets down.

I hope that you've noticed something amazing about these lists. The husband and wife can do all of these things. By the way, except for calling your children at school, these will all work well with the children, too. Think what an example to your children you will be by practicing these hints with each other in front of them and then practicing these hints on them.

DPW
Directorate of Public Works

From Left to Right the DPW team: MAJ Arnie Sulit, SGT Marlin White, PFC Brandon White, MSG Ricky Alexander, SFC Troy Heffner, SFC Gerard Baza, MAJ Anthony Streletz, SGT Brian Pascual, MAJ Dane Snowden, 1LT Derek Wischmann. Not Pictured CPT Dave Rogers.

The Directorate of Public Works is the primary engineer section for the Garrison Command that is responsible for engineering construction, utilities, environmental compliance, terrain management, master planning, and operations and maintenance for engineer services. DPW currently manages over 130 projects in excess of 50 million dollars that includes major road repair, gravel delivery, power generation, HAZMAT removal, facilities construction, and contractual assistance at the Victory Base Complex. DPW is considered the equivalent of a Township or Municipal Public Works that one would find in any town or city in the US. We are the crew that takes 6 guys to watch one guy fill a pothole.

DPW is made up of the following Thunderbolt Soldiers: MAJ Arnie Sulit (DPW Director), MAJ Anthony Streletz (Engineer Plans and Construction Chief), MAJ Dane Snowden (Force Protection Chief) CPT Dave Rogers (Construction Manager), 1LT Derek Wischmann (Utilities Chief), MSG Ricky Alexander (DPW Sergeant Major), SFC Gerard Baza (Operations NCOIC), SFC Troy Heffner (Engineer Section NCOIC), SGT Brian Pascual (Environmental NCO), SGT Marlin White (Operations Clerk), and PFC Brandon Wright (AutoCAD Designer).

The garden variety DPW week goes as follows. Monday, we have our weekly coordination meeting where we discuss upcoming events, project development, and current engineering issues, then we break for work. Tuesday mornings the BDOC hosts their weekly force protection meeting where projects such as lighting the perimeter wall, improving barriers at entry control points, and keeping water flooding under concrete walls. Wednesday is the USACE and Fluor Daniels project coordination meeting where the main topic discussed is Operations and Maintenance contracts on smaller projects such as electrical hook ups, debris and graffiti removal, and building maintenance. Thursday morning is the KBR projects meeting who are busy with gravel delivery, ductile pipe digging, and electrical estimations. Friday is the Liberty Governor Cell Meeting where all engineer projects occurring at West and East LSA, which houses the bases war fighting division. Saturday is the Garrison Command's Project Meeting that is hosted by DPW in which the Mayors, Camp DPW Chiefs, Directorate Directors, and senior brigade leaders meet to go through all the DPW projects that are ongoing. Sunday is an administrative catch up day to get back to speed on paperwork and prep for the next week.

DPW is typically the last Directorate to leave each day and are involved in every other directorate's business. VBC is engineering happy and there is plenty to do to improve the existing infrastructure to support the critical life support systems that allows units to conduct their wartime mission.